

Community Sensitionsation and Training for the Conservation of Historic Cemeteries in Kolkata

PROJECT REPORT | PHASE I **2024 - 2025**

Report prepared by Neeta Shubhrajit Das Associates, Kolkata, after completion of the first phase of the project which was conducted between September 2024 to February 2025.















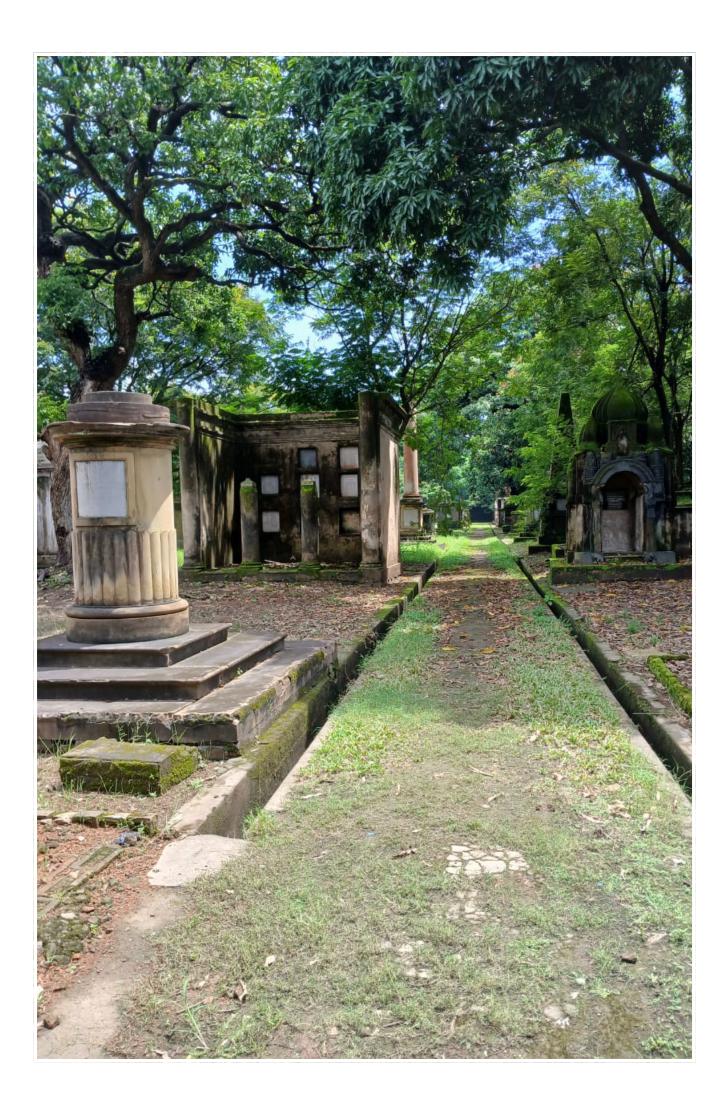












Overview

About the Forum and Training Program

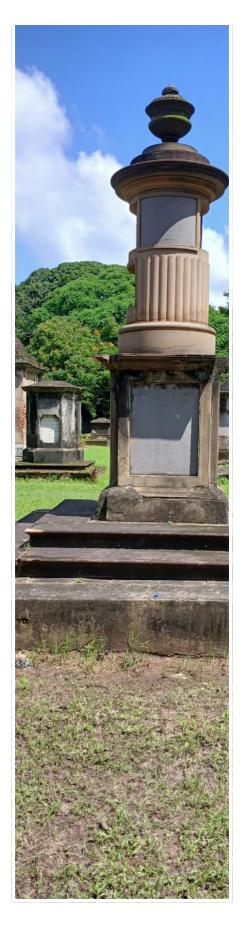
The Commonwealth Heritage Forum is a charity that facilitates conservation-led regeneration and sustainable economic growth by providing opportunities for learning, research, and skills development for people at historic sites across the Commonwealth. Launched in May 2022, The Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Commonwealth Heritage Skills Training Programme supports Commonwealth countries to develop the range of specialist skills needed to protect valuable heritage sites. The Programme is the largest ever investment in heritage skills in Commonwealth history and it will train over 3,500 young people in the hands-on crafts skills and sustainable strategies needed to repair historic buildings at risk. The Programme focuses on those countries where local stakeholders tell us the need is greatest and where there is little existing capacity to address heritage at risk.

About BACSA

BACSA - the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia-is a charity founded in 1977 to bring together people with a concern for the hundreds of former European cemeteries, isolated graves and monuments in the area from the Red Sea to the China coast — wherever the East India Company set foot. They locate, identify, record and help to conserve the European cemeteries, isolated graves and monuments from before 1947. BACSA makes positive interventions where there is a strong local base of people willing to conserve cemeteries, by offering financial aid and advice. Their records and cemetery projects promote knowledge of the history of places in South Asia associated with European residence.

About the Project

Since the beginning of civilisation, history has accumulated endless buildings and structures but only some of them were identified for restoration. These were selected by a historian, or a group, for their 'value' and 'perceived threat'. The process of conservation then includes the understanding and knowledge of what is being conserved, why is it being conserved, and how will it be conserved. The methodology used for such a process includes research, documentation, sensitization, condition survey, material research, and restoration techniques and is also the basis for the training program through workshops, internships, classes, heritage walks, seminars, and hands on training modules.

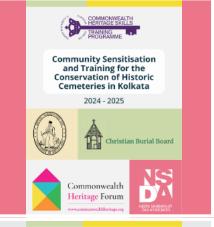


Internship Program

The internship program was designed to explore historic cemeteries and the pressing questions they pose to the field of heritage conservation. Whereas the sentiments and the commitment of the British are very clear about these historic cemeteries, the same are not reciprocated by the Indians who are also now the owners and custodians of such cemeteries. The intention of the research carried out by the interns was to explore narratives that may result in presenting these cemeteries as a shared heritage between the two sides.















Brief Summary of research findings:

Rajesh Giri

Rajesh Giri carried out a condition survey of the whole cemetery. He has observed that only 44% of the graves now have tombs and the oldest quarter one, which now has a nursery, has the oldest graves. Some of the graves were also lost when the AJC road was widened. The cyclone Dana crossed West Bengal during this period and Kolkata had heavy rains. Much of the cemetery was water clogged. Even after a week the water was found collected in various pockets. His observations indicate that the cemetery naturally slopes towards the Rowdon pond, but due to improper drainage, the water stagnates on the boundaries. The poor drainage is also the cause for dampness and decay of many tombs. There is considerable damage to tombs also due to neglect, vandalism, and vegetation.

CONTACT

- 9897836180
- ✓ rajeshgiri872001@gmail.com
- 20/2, Seal Lane, Tangara Kolkata West Bengal, 700015

DOB - 08/07/2001

SKILL

- word, Excel, Powerpoint
- Team Management
- Public Speaking

ACHIEVEMENT

- NCC "C" Certificate with A Grade
- Advance Kayaking Course
- · Destination Guide Course
- State level youth conference speech competition prize

LANGUAGES

- English
- Hindi

ABOUT ME

Post graduate in Archaeology and graduate in science with experience in various fields including Adventure Sports kayaking, Mountaineering, Cycling etc. Destination Guide training and 3 years NCC Course volunteered in relief works enjoy teamwork and management keen interest in Art and Culture, creative work love public speaking.

EDUCATION

postgraduation

Archaeology

- Soban Singh Jeena University, Campus Almora
- 75%

Graduation

Bechelor of Science

DECEMBER- 2022

JULY - 20244

- · Kumaon University Nainital
- Soban Singh Jeena Campus Almora
- 67%

Class 12th

Science 2017-18

- · Uttarakhand Board
- 77%

EXPERIENCE

- Currently an Intern at Neeta shubhrajit Das Associates
- Guided Tour organised at RKM Almora
- Volunteered in relief works by RKM Almora

SOUTH PARK STREET CEMETERY CONDITION SURVEY

General Condition Survey of SPSC



Observations

- ➤ Water logging
- ➤ Vegetation growth
- ➤ Needs inspection





Brief Summary of research findings:

Tania Das

Tania Das further added to the importance of the SPSC in the dense city of Kolkata. Not only does the SPSC along with other cemeteries form a green lung and carbon sink for the city, it could also participate in helping revive the ecological corridor that connects the East Kolkata Wetlands with the River Hooghly which would go a long way in the mitigation of climate change and improving the quality of our environment. The biodiversity of SPSC is influenced greatly by the remnants of the original landscape, like the Rowdon Pond, which have since been fragmented due to urbanisation.

DESIGN & RESEARCH PROJECTS

- 2020- Urban Biodiversity Park Design at the Scottish Cemetery, Kolkata. Kolkata Scottish Heritage Trust, St. Andrew's Church, Kolkata and Scotland. (ongoing)
- Ecological Regeneration of eArthshala 2023- Campus, Project Potential Trust, Kishanganj, Bihar. (ongoing)
- Development of Indigenous Tree
 Corridors along Road Verges, Ward 87,
 Kolkata Municipal Corporation, Kolkata.
- 2022 Conservation of Natural Heritage at Mulagandha Kuti Vihar, Sarnath, Ripa Ladrang Foundation and Mahabodhi Society of India.
- 2022 Sustainable Farm, Prabhat Agarwal, Lucknow.
- Courtyard Garden, Sharmila Dey, 2021 Kolkata.
- Ecological Analysis at the A.J.C. Bose Indian Botanic Garden, Howrah.

Funded Research, Regeneration and Ecological Framework Plan for the Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Indian Botanic Garden, Howrah, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh and Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata.

2020 Analysis of the Composition, Diversity and Threats in the Tropical Dry Deciduous Reserve Forest of Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow

Funded Research, Anaesthesia Education Trust and Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow.

EDUCATION

- Specialization in Forest Landscape
 Conservation, Fundación Jatun Sacha,
 Jatun Sacha Biological Station,
 Ecuador
- 2018 Master of Landscape Design CEPT University, Ahmedabad
- 2015 Bachelor of Design (Furniture & Interior Design) Visva-Bharati University, Shantiniketan

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

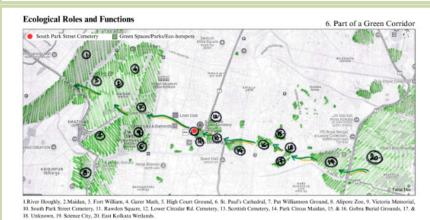
- 2022- Visiting Faculty,
 Department of Architecture,
 Jadavpur University, Kolkata
 (ongoing)
- 2023- Adjunct Faculty,
 Architecture, Planning and
 Interior Design, Amity
 University, Kolkata (ongoing)
- Principal Designer, 2020- Forêt, Kolkata (ongoing)
- 2021 Landscape Designer, Inscape Design Studio, Kolkata
- 2019 Landscape Designer, Hangingreens, Noida
- 2016 Intern, Nature Environment and Wildlife Society, Kolkata
- 2015 Intern, Lighting Design, LiGHT-FiSH, Auroville, Pondicherry

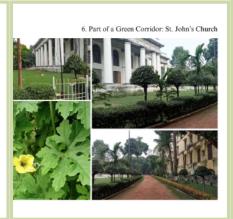
Landscape Plan for Ecology and Restoration South Park Street Cemetery

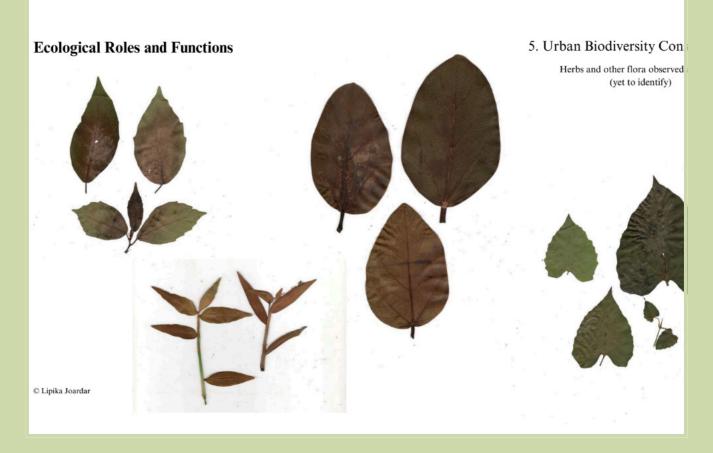
Tania Das
Spec. Forest Conservation, Fundación Jatun Sacha, Ecuadorian Amazon Rainforest
Master of Landscape Design, CEPT University, Ahmedabad

Lipika Joardar Field Surveyor









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Brief Summary of research findings:

Lipika Joardar

Lipika Joardar carries out detailed biodiversity surveys of the SPSC and has identified many large trees; birds, some of which are rare for this location; moss, alge, and especially lichen which is an indicator of clean air, which is surprising as the cemetery is on a very busy street; rare varieties of moths living inside old tombs; but very little undergrowth that sustains biodiversity. Many trees are being 'trimmed' but many saplings continue to grow under them too. Much of the ground were very moist and the drainage of the cemetery is probably connected with the nearby Rowdon pond, directly or directly, and water snakes were spotted in these drains.

CURRICULUM VITAE

LIPIKA JOARDAR

MOBILE NO: - 9874944456 EMAIL I.D. - lipikajoardar1988@gmail.com



ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION

EXAMINATION NAME	BOARD	SCHOOL	YEAR OF PASSING
SECONDARY	W.B.B.S.E.	MALLICKPUR GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL	2007

TRAINING & CERTIFICATE

- 1. BASIC MOUNTAINEERING COURSE FORM HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINEERING INSTITUTE DARJEELING
- 2. ROCK CLIMBIN COURSE FORM PURULIA GAJABURU HILL
- 3. IMF YOUTH SPORT CLIMBING TRAINING
- 4. LIFEGUARD CETIFIATE COURSE PASSED FROM BLUE WORLD ADVENTURE, KOLKATA

WORK EXPERIENCE

- 1) FIELD RESEARCHER, FORET, KOLKATA, AUGUST, 2024- ON WORDS.
- 2) TRAINEE, NEETA SHUBHRAJIT DAS ASSOCIATES, MAY-JUNE 2024.
- 3) SWIMMING INSTRUCTOR, BLUE WORLD ADVENTURE, KOLKATA, 2022-2023.
- 4) JAGACHA YUBA SHAKTI , MEMBER, FEBRUARY, 2022 ONWARDS.

INTERESTS & ACTIVITIES

- LISTENING TO MUSIC.
- ROCK CLIMBING.
- SWIMMING
- ADVENTURE SPORTS.
- READING NOVEL.

PERSONAL PROFILE

FATHER'S NAME : KHAGENDRANATH JOARDAR

DATE OF BIRTH : 13/06/1992
GENDER : FEMALE
MARITAL STATUS : INDIAN
RELIGION : HINDU

LANGUAGES KNOWN : BENGALI (READ, WRITE, SPEAK), HINDI (READ, WRITE, SPEAK) ENGLISH (READ)

DECLARATION:

I HEREBY DECLARE THAT THE ABOVE MENTIONED INFORMATIONS ARE CORRECT UP TO MY KNOWLEDGE AND

I BEAR THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CORRECTNESS OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED PARTICULARS.

Ecological Roles and Functions

2. Minimises Urban Heat Isla





rdar

6. Part of a Green Corridor: Nature Study Park



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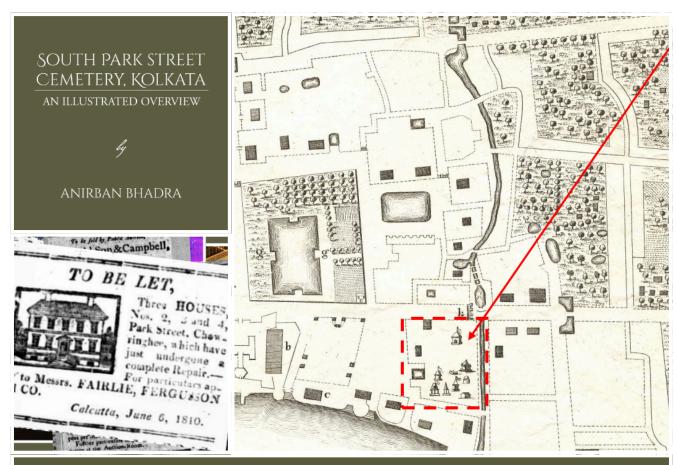
Brief Summary of research findings:

Anirban Bhadra

Anirban Bhadra looked at the historical importance of the SPSC along with the other cemeteries in the Park Street area. He observed that several of these cemeteries have since vanished and a large historical resource has been lost and the same would happen if the SPSC is not conserved. The SPSC, and other 19th century European cemeteries in India pre-date the Burial reforms in Europe and may have influenced these changes. He also highlighted many historical personalities buried in these cemeteries who have a strong connect with the city even today.

Brief biodata

- Candidate name: Anirban Bhadra (he/him)
- Date of birth: 31 July 1997
- Age: 27 years
- Qualification: B. A. General (pursuing), Indira Gandhi National Open University, (2023-?).
- Profession: Independent researcher and author
- Research interests: British Calcutta, British India, Europeans in India, cross-cultural encounters between Europeans and Indians, etc.
- \bullet *Published work(s)*:
 - > Pompous Graves: A History of the Park Street Cemeteries of Calcutta, BACSA (London: 2023).
 - ➤ Rachel Magowan (ed.), "'Pompous Graves' A heritage walk through South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata", in *BACSA News*, April, 2024.
 - > Soumitra Das, "Untold stories of Park Street Cemeteries disinterred", *The Telegraph*, Kolkata, 26th February, 2024.
 - ➤ A book on the Job Charnock controversy (upcoming).
- E-mail: abhadra534@gmail.com
- Phone: (+91) 91630 45197
- Social media handles:
 - ➤ X (formerly Twitter): @lordvuddraw
 - ➤ Facebook: Anirban Bhadra
- $\bullet \ References:$
 - ➤ Dr. Neeta Das, Neeta Subhrajit Das Associates
 - ➤ Dr. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, BACSA, UK



HIC JACET ANGELICA DE CARRION EDWARDI TIRETTA TARVISINI UXOR DILECTISSIMA OUAM

TERTIO DIE POST PIGNUS AMORIS DATUM MORS ERIPUIT XV JUNII A. D. MDCCXCVI ET ÆTATIS SUÆ XVIII HOC MARMOR MEMORIÆ SACRUM POSUIT CONJUX MŒRENS

> Here lies Angelica de Carrion, Dear wife of Edward Tiretta of Treviso,

Whom, on the third day after a pledge of Love had been given, Death has delivered on the 15th of June, 1796, in her 18th year.

This marble sacred to her memory has been set up by her grieving husband.

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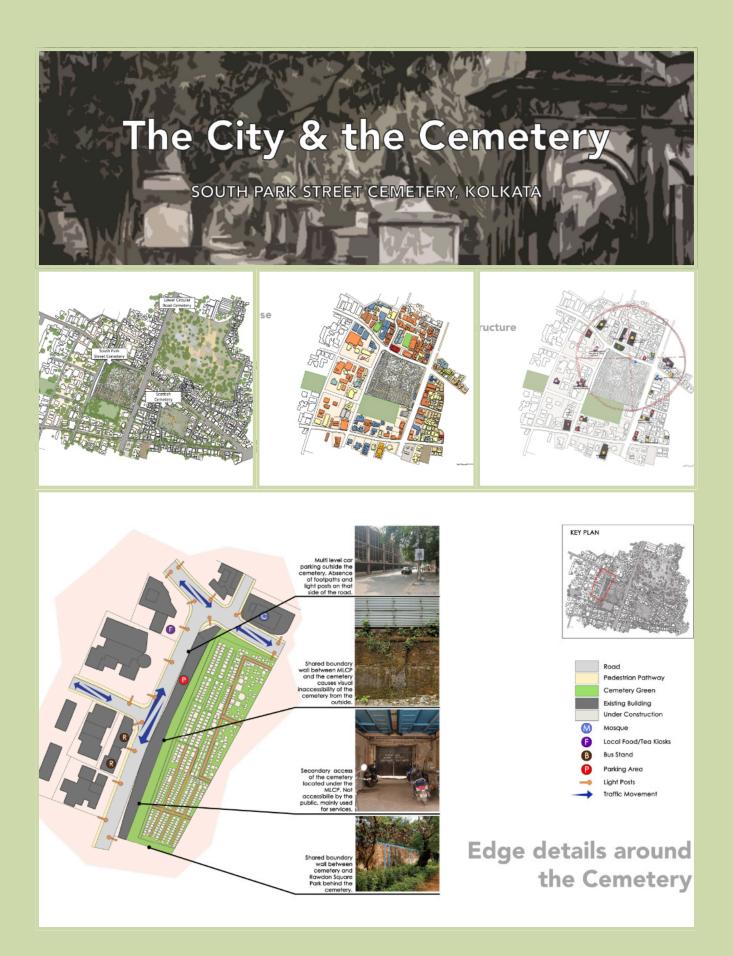
Brief Summary of research findings:

Aayush Tapadia

Aayush Tapadia found that the SPSC was very well connected to the whole city through all forms of public and private transport that makes its location vulnerable as a prime real estate hotspot. It is surrounded by a business district and high rise buildings. He observed that as a collective, the five cemeteries including the SPSC make for a rich urban open space that can be better utilised by cultural enthusiasts as an urban park, by the neighbours offering a pleasant 'view from the window', and if the boundary walls were lowered, a pleasant walk for the people moving on the streets.

Brief biodata

- Candidate name: Anirban Bhadra (he/him)
- Date of birth: 31 July 1997
- Age: 27 years
- Qualification: B. A. General (pursuing), Indira Gandhi National Open University, (2023-?).
- Profession: Independent researcher and author
- Research interests: British Calcutta, British India, Europeans in India, cross-cultural encounters between Europeans and Indians, etc.
- *Published work(s)*:
 - > Pompous Graves: A History of the Park Street Cemeteries of Calcutta, BACSA (London: 2023).
 - ➤ Rachel Magowan (ed.), "'Pompous Graves' A heritage walk through South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata", in *BACSA News*, April, 2024.
 - > Soumitra Das, "Untold stories of Park Street Cemeteries disinterred", *The Telegraph*, Kolkata, 26th February, 2024.
 - > A book on the Job Charnock controversy (upcoming).
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- Social media handles:
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- \bullet References:
 - ➤ Dr. Neeta Das, Neeta Subhrajit Das Associates
 - > Dr. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, BACSA, UK



Outcome and Way Forward

The findings of the interns clearly indicate that the South Park Street Cemetery is a very important heritage site with far reaching implications not only for the city but for the world at large by being a rich resource for history and culture, a carbon sink for the dense city, and a much needed urban park for visitors. This study helped the project to move forward in an informed manner and was useful in re-thinking the choice and priorities for the restoration of the identified tombs. The research findings were further disseminated through sensitisation workshops which were attended by heritage custodians, students, and citizens of Kolkata. A team from the Commonwealth Heritage Forum visited the cemetery and interacted with the interns who enthusiastically demonstrated their findings. The internship program was conducted through site visits, meetings, online meetings, and presentations and ended with an international seminar organised in collaboration with AUD Academy, https://www.audacademy.org/ and was attended by participants from all over the world. This seminar also formed the introduction program for the Imagining Timeless Places Design Competition 2024-25 for students of Urban Design.







AUDA Seminar

This second edition of AUDA's Imagining Tomorrow Awrads (ITA) builds upon the "Community Sensitisation and Training Program for the Conservation of Historic Cemeteries in Kolkata", organized by NSDA in collaboration with the Commonwealth Heritage Forum, BACSA, and the Christian Burial Ground. Participants will utilize comprehensive research and base materials developed by program interns to craft visionary proposals addressing this pressing issue. The "Imagining Timeless Places" competition invites participants to critically reimagine Kolkata's iconic South Park Street Cemetery and its surroundings, envisioning a future where this historic landmark resonates with contemporary urban life. The competition challenges designers to weave the cemetery into the evolving urban fabric of Kolkata—balancing heritage preservation with the city's developmental needs, community aspirations, and real-estate dynamics.





Recommendations

South Park Street Cemetery Site Inspection Report for BACSA

Dr. Neeta Das December 2024



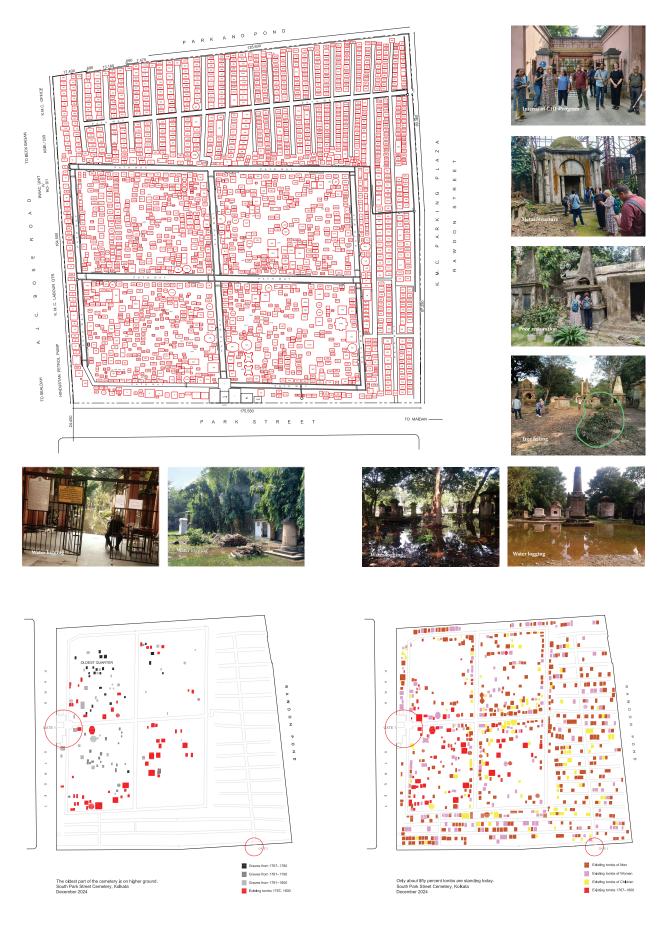


South Park Street Cemetery, formerly known as the 'Great Christian Burial Ground', was one of the earliest non-church cemeteries in the world. The cemetery houses numerous graves and monuments belonging to British soldiers, administrators, and their families. It is also the final resting place of several prominent personalities, including Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and Sir William Jones. It is located on Mother Teresa Sarani, also known as Park Street, Central Kolkata, India.

Introduction: In 1977, Satyajit Ray's novel Gorosthane Sabdhan brought attention to the neglect of Kolkata's historic and iconic South Park Street Cemetery (1767–1830), home to over 1,600 graves. That same year, the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia (BACSA) initiated efforts to restore the cemetery. By 1981, restoration was completed, and the site was declared a heritage landmark by the state government in 1982. The Association for the Preservation of Historic Cemeteries in India (APHCI) was formed in 1978 to oversee ongoing maintenance, with a dedicated team operating from an on-site office. However, this system ceased after the 2020 pandemic. Today the site is being maintained by the Christian Burial Board.

Condition Today: Neeta Shubhrajit Das Associates, collaborating with the Commonwealth Heritage Forum and the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia, assessed the South Park Street Cemetery for a proposed restoration and training program. The assessment revealed significant challenges, including severe waterlogging, which has left the grounds and tombs damp. A large nursery within the premises exacerbates the dampness issue. Despite attracting numerous visitors who pay an entry fee, the cemetery lacks essential amenities like toilets and drinking water. Nearly fifty percent of the tombs are already lost, and without urgent conservation efforts, the cemetery risks losing its historical artefacts. There is also a concern that it may eventually be built over, similar to other cemeteries in the area, jeopardising its cultural and historical significance and very existence like many other cemeteries in the area.

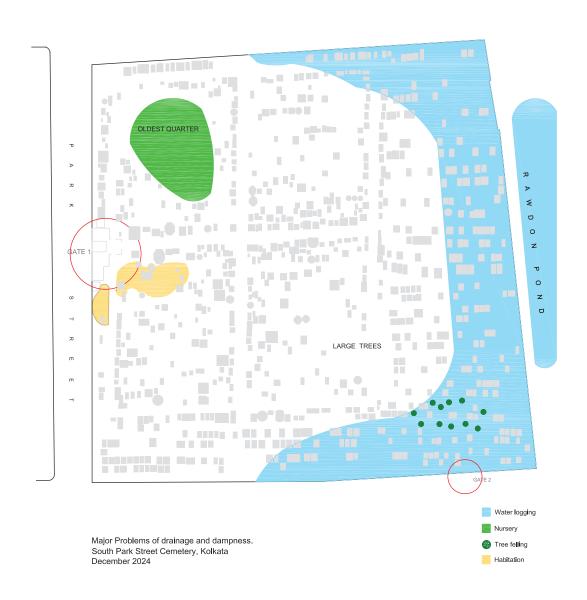
Way Forward: The South Park Street Cemetery is a vital heritage site in Kolkata with the potential to serve as a significant tourist destination, an educational and research resource center, and a green lung for the densely populated urban city. To preserve its value, immediate steps are required, starting with detailed documentation and condition surveys of the tombs. Addressing issues like poor drainage is critical, along with developing basic infrastructure, including well-maintained pathways, drinking water, and toilet facilities. These measures can be incorporated into a comprehensive conservation masterplan, which can be implemented gradually based on priority and available resources. Such efforts would ensure the cemetery's preservation while enhancing its cultural, educational, and ecological importance.

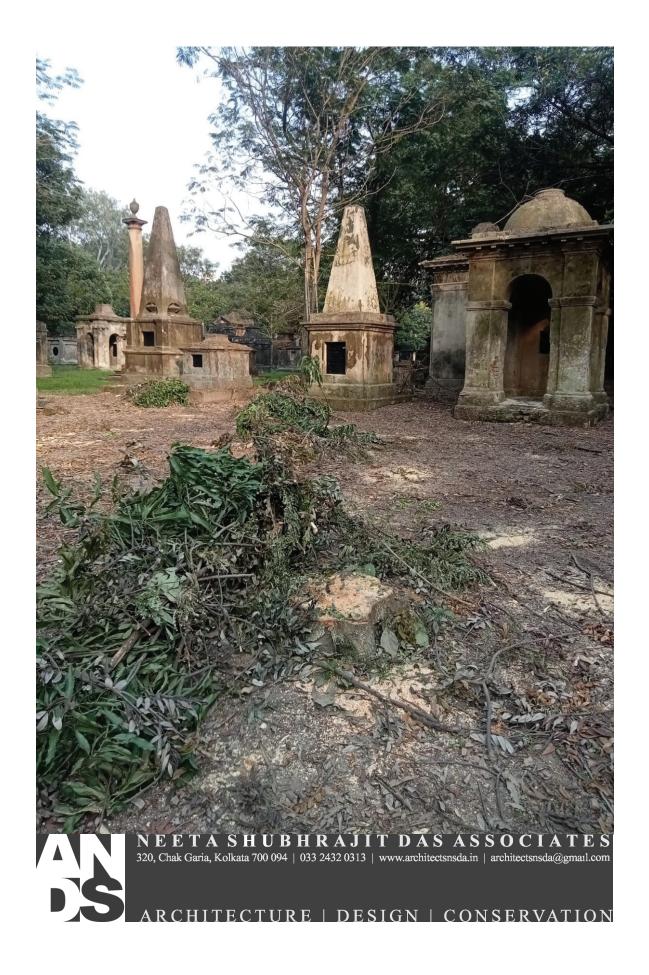


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Value Education Program

When the program started, it was found that many families including women and children, were living in the five cemeteries owned by the Christian Burial Board and it was felt necessary to include these members in the sensitisation and training programs through value education programs designed for them. The idea was to first conduct a survey to understand their need before starting. But the program was not approved by the custodians and was not started. Communities of Karaya Road and students of the Future Hope school, both belonging to the under privileged segment were included in the other workshops.

	up - A - General Information of	on Fai	nily													
Address/ Cemetery -								Occupa	ion/ Pro	fession	-				na, 2. Pucca	
Name of Respondent -													No. of room - Kitchen -			
Gender - Male Female Age - Religion-							Total Family Members -				Toilet -					
Permanent Address – Door No. Street name:							No. of I	amily M	Iember	s Staying	ing with - Source of drinking water -					
State: District:											Year/s of Association with the Area -					
Gro	Group – B - Information on Family Members															
SI. No	Name	Gender- Male-1, Female-2	Age	Relation with the head of the family	Language spoken	If school / college going: Yes - 1, No - 2	Name of school / college		Marital status: Married -1, Unmarried -2	If working: Yes – 1, No- 2	Type of work	Place of work		Year/s of association with the work	General health issue /s	Permanent address
L																
<u> </u>														\vdash		
Gro	Group- C - What do you know about this heritage site? -															
	What do you think about this site? -															
What do you think about mis sale: - Do you like to stay here? -																
How can it be improved? -																
	Programme you want us to run for your children- 1. Children- Adolescent bo							boys-				Adolesce	nt girls-			Adult women-

Dt. Of survey : Surveyed by:

Restoration

After inspection it was found that the cemetery site had severe water logging problems and did not have the necessary infrastructural services like toilets and water supply facilities to support training around a restoration project. We looked at alternative sites like Barrackpore, Duff College, etc. but none were feasible. A few samples for stone cleaning were carried out but eventually the idea of restoration of the four tombs at the South Park Street Cemetery was temporarily postponed for the current financial year.







Alternate Restoration Site

Jorabagan Police Station/ Duff College Campus 48 Nimtala Ghat Street, Kolkata

2024

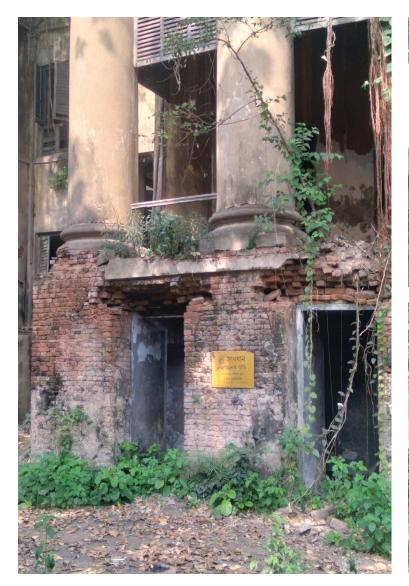
Built in 1857 for Free Church Institution, it was renamed Scottish Church College in 1929, and was handed over to the police later that year. It has since been part of the Jorabagan Police Station.

Further reading:

http://double-dolphin.blogspot.com/2016/01/duff-college-jo-rabagan-thana-calcutta-kolkata.html

https://www.telegraphindia.com/culture/heritage/a-doff-to-duff/cid/1798216

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/scottish-church-college-seeks-help-from-heritage-panel-to-reclaim-duff-college/articleshow/106587561.cms









Sensitisation Workshops

Historic Cemeteries are vital heritage sites in Kolkata with the potential to serve as significant tourist destinations, educational and research resource centres, and green lungs for the densely populated urban city. Three sensitisation workshops were conducted around these themes and were attended by nearly ninety people which included professionals, nature lovers, tourists, scholars, and children from all walks of life.









Workshop One: 28.12.24, Saturday

Heritage within Cemeteries

A walk around St. John's Churchyard in Central Kolkata to appreciate the history, architecture, and art within these sites. Renowned historians and conservation architects shall point out interesting aspects of their value, decay, and restoration. This workshop shall be useful for all interested in heritage and its conservation..



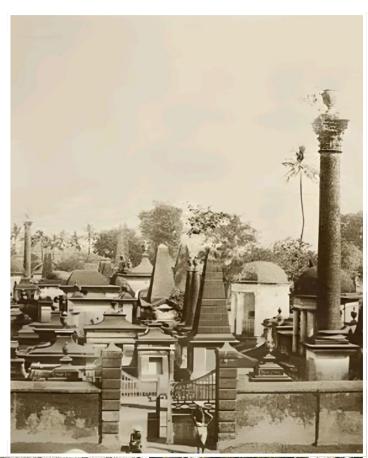


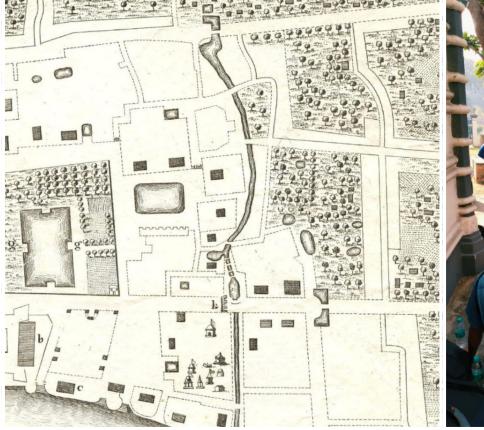


Community Sensitionsation and Training for the Conservation of Historic Cemeteries in Kolkata PROJECT REPORT | PHASE I

Name on grave from site BRABOURNE D. Feb 2.3*& 19.39 B. 3*& Kay 189.5 Principal Tomb Material (circle) Principal Material (circle) Principal Material (circle) Principal

Grave Inspection Form



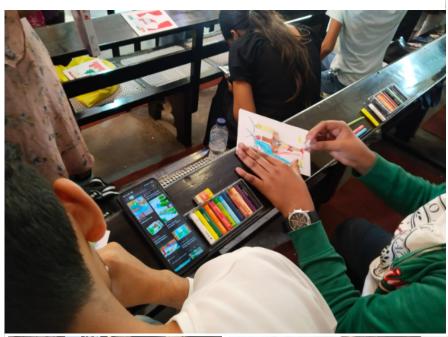




Workshop Two: 29.01.25, Sunday

People and their Stories

A visit to the St. Mary's Church and graveyard to appreciate the culture and festivals of different communities. The children of the Karaya Road Muslim community participated in the Christmas and New Year celebrations with members of the Church.

















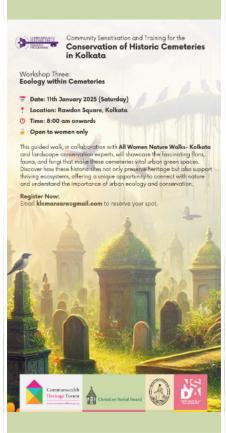
Workshop Three: 11. 01.25, Saturday

Ecology within Cemeteries

Women and children of Future Hope school visited the South Park Street cemetery and the adjoining Rawdon Square to appreciate the ecology and biodiversity within these sites. Enthusiastic nature lovers and landscape conservation experts mesmerised them with interesting species, habitats, and the lives of flora, fauna and fungi residing in urban green spaces.



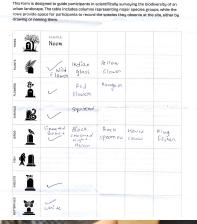














Team

1. Neeta Das.

Architectural Historian and Conservation Architect. Principal, Neeta Shubhrajit Das Associates.

2. Rajat Ray.

Conservation Architect and Urban Designer. Retired as Professor from I. P. University, New Delhi.

3. Ishita Das.

Communication Designer. Principal, Komorebi, Dubai.

4. Anindya Chatterjee.

Conservation and civil contractor, Kolkata.

5. Tinku Ghosh.

Logistic and general contractor, Kolkata.

6. Rakhi Poddar.

Social worker and teacher, Kolkata.

7. Aayush Tapadia.

Architect, Masters in Urban Planning, (Milan). Working at urban design firm, Kolkata.

8. Anirban Bhadra.

Author, Pompous Graves: A History of the Park Street cemeteries of Calcutta. Freelance writer, Kolkata.

9. Lipika Joardar.

Biodiversity Field Surveyor. Working with Foret, Kolkata.

10. Rajesh Giri.

Masters in Archaeology. Working with INTACH, Kolkata.

11. Tania Das.

Landscape Designer, Specialisation in Forest Conservation, Jatun Sacha Biological Station, Ecuador. Faculty in a design institute, Kolkata.























